



## Child & Youth Readiness Cabinet

In October 2008, Governor Deval Patrick signed Executive Order 505 establishing the Child and Youth Readiness Cabinet (“Readiness Cabinet”). The purpose of the Readiness Cabinet is to foster coordination and collaboration across state departments and agencies that serve Massachusetts' children, youth and families.

Co-chaired by the Secretaries of Education and Health and Human Services, the Readiness Cabinet’s membership also includes the Secretaries of Administration and Finance, Housing and Economic Development, Labor and Workforce Development, Public Safety and Security and The Child Advocate. Commissioners from several agencies within the Executive Offices of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) and Education (EOE) also participate as full members. With the aim of improved collaboration, the Readiness Cabinet is focused on two of Governor Patrick’s goals: *closing the achievement gap* and *eliminating youth violence*.

### *Closing the Achievement Gap:*

Closing the achievement gap is central to all of the Commonwealth’s education initiatives. The Patrick-Murray administration believes that in order to close the achievement gap, we need both to improve classroom instruction *and* mitigate the effects of poverty. By addressing *all* students’ non-academic needs (that is, those that relate to their physical, behavioral, and social-emotional health – as well as their housing and other family support challenges), we will put students in the best possible position to access educational opportunities and succeed.

In 2010, Governor Patrick signed into law the Achievement Gap Act, which requires the state’s lowest performing, or Level 4, schools to include strategies for addressing these non-academic needs of students as part of their school redesign plans. To reinforce this expectation, the legislation requires that the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, as well as other Cabinet Secretariats, respond to the needs of children and families and work with school districts to ensure a holistic response to child/family needs.

In an effort to ensure that all Level 4 schools have access to the resources they need to address these issues, the Readiness Cabinet is focusing its early work in four communities with many of the Commonwealth’s Level 4 schools - Holyoke, Lawrence, Springfield and Worcester. Work in these four communities is designed to provide models and lessons learned about how inter-agency collaboration can improve outcomes for students – making an evidence-based case for expansion of this type of inter-agency collaboration to other districts.

### **Child & Youth Readiness Cabinet Members**

#### Co-chairs

Matthew Malone, Secretary, Executive Office of Education

John Polanowicz, Secretary, Executive Office of Health and Human Services

#### Members

Greg Bialecki, Secretary, Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development

Andrea Cabral, Secretary, Executive Office of Public Safety and Security

Joanne Goldstein, Secretary, Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development

Glen Shor, Secretary, Executive Office of Administration and Finance

Mitchell Chester, Commissioner, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Ed Dolan, Commissioner, Department of Youth Services

Rosalie Edes, Acting Assistant Secretary, Education Office of Health and Human Services

Marcia Fowler, Commissioner, Department of Mental Health

Richard Freeland, Commissioner, Department of Higher Education

Gail Garinger, Child Advocate

Elin Howe, Commissioner, Department of Developmental Services

Josiane Martinez, Executive Director, Office of Refugees and Immigrants

Angelo McClain, Commissioner, Department of Children and Families

Stacey Monahan, Interim Commissioner, Department of Transitional Assistance

Dr. Lauren Smith, Interim Commissioner, Department of Public Health

Richard K. Sullivan, Jr., Secretary, Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs

Tom Weber, Acting Commissioner, Department of Early Care and Education

#### Staff

Abby R. Weiss, Manager, Child & Youth Readiness Cabinet

The Readiness Cabinet has committed to working with these school communities to better equip district and school personnel, as well as service providers to meet the needs of the whole child – and ultimately, to improve outcomes for all children. The Readiness Cabinet’s approach is customized based on each school community’s unique assets, challenges, levels of capacity and infrastructure to address the non-academic barriers to learning. EOHHS has identified three Readiness Cabinet Liaisons (“Liaisons”) – on part-time loan from three agencies (Department of Transitional Assistance, Department of Mental Health, and Department of Children and Families) – who are building relationships, capacity, and better linkages between schools and their state agency and community-based partners. Liaisons are also sharing information across agencies, problem solving, and sharing plans for capacity building at the district and school level.

#### *Other Focus Areas Related to Closing the Achievement Gap:*

In addition, the Readiness Cabinet is tackling other issues that will move the needle on the Governor’s goal of closing the achievement gap. The Readiness Cabinet’s Early Childhood Subcommittee is focused on fostering collaboration across agencies that serve the Commonwealth’s youngest citizens, with a particular focus on elements of the state’s recent [Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant](#). Growing directly out of work with our three pilot school districts, the Readiness Cabinet is convening an inter-agency working group focused on the ways in which agencies can support school districts’ efforts to increase student attendance. In addition, the Cabinet is establishing a sub-committee focused on positive youth development and eliminating youth violence. These working groups meet independently and then report their progress at the Readiness Cabinet’s quarterly meetings.

#### *Eliminating Youth Violence:*

The Patrick-Murray Administration is implementing a comprehensive statewide strategy for preventing youth violence. The Administration’s approach is focused on preventing violent crime while at the same time enabling young people to make positive choices and pursue alternative opportunities.

The Safe and Successful Youth Initiative (SSYI) grant program is one of the Patrick-Murray Administration’s strategies to fill in gaps in the services available for the highest risk populations. SSYI is a comprehensive violence prevention strategy aimed at reducing youth homicides and serious assaults in Massachusetts. In fiscal year 2012, approximately \$10M in grants were awarded to 11 cities (Boston, Lynn, Lowell, Worcester, Springfield, Lawrence, Brockton, Chelsea, Fall River, New Bedford and Holyoke) for targeted intervention programs with high impact youth and their families. This grant program is a coordinated intervention strategy focused on young men (age 14-24) identified as a high risk for becoming perpetrators or victims of gun violence. The goal is to ensure that a full continuum of services - trauma informed case management, intensive supervision, employment, education and health care - are available and coordinated in each city and are reaching the target population.

For additional information about the Child & Youth Readiness Cabinet, please contact Cabinet Manager Abby Weiss at [abby.weiss@state.ma.us](mailto:abby.weiss@state.ma.us), or 617.979.8348.